

WASHINGTON POST

8 November 1984

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE D.C. 11**JACK ANDERSON**

The CIA's Man on Horseback?

The problem the CIA spy masters faced was a toughie: How to get their man in Honolulu in a position where he'd be rubbing elbows with foreign potentates and millionaire businessmen.

The answer: polo.

According to Ronald Ray Rewald—a Honolulu investment counselor charged with fraud in the failure of what he insists was a CIA-front company—his bosses in the agency ordered him in 1980 “to use polo as a vehicle to cultivate social and business relationships” with prominent foreigners.

As it turned out, their Hawaiian eye did better than expected: He eventually became the owner of the polo club.

It wasn't all Pimm's cups and panatellas for Rewald, though. First he had to spend six months learning to ride horseback. This became trickier when he discovered that he was allergic to horses, and had to avoid skin contact with the critters.

But Rewald rose to the challenge, and soon acquired enough equestrian expertise to qualify as a participating member of the Hawaii Polo Club. Its well-manicured greensward has kissed the mallets of local and international polo pros, as well as titled aficionados such as Prince Charles of Britain and King Edward of Malaysia.

In this exalted company, Rewald was soon mining a rich lode of useful information, useless tips and titillating gossip for the delectation of his superiors in Langley, Va. There were always half a dozen or more CIA agents at the polo club “working the foreign visitors,” Rewald confided to a friend.

According to an affidavit filed by Rewald, other documents and intelligence sources interviewed by

my associates Dale Van Atta and Indy Badhwar, four contacts made at the polo club were a particular bonanza for the CIA. They were the Guatamas, a wealthy Indonesian family; Saud Mohammed, a crown prince of United Arab Emirates; Enrique Zobel, a leading Philippines banker, and Sultan Muda Hassanah Bolkiah of Brunei.

The sultan, an avid polo player, was a coup for Rewald and the CIA. His tiny country on the northern end of Borneo is one of the richest per capita in the world, thanks to its oil.

The friendship Rewald cultivated between chukkers paid off at a time when the United States was competing with other countries for the sultan's attention—and cash. Encouraged by Rewald, the sultan made his first visit to the United States, and the relationship has flourished.

But it was Zobel, the banker, who was probably the greatest source of worthwhile information for Rewald and his CIA masters. One of the world's richest men and chairman of the Bank of the Philippine Islands, Zobel was a close friend of President Ferdinand Marcos and his influential wife, Imelda.

Tapping into the Marcoses had been difficult, because of the first lady's hatred and suspicion of the CIA. But it wasn't long before Zobel became, in Rewald's words, “a tremendous source of information on the thoughts and movements of President Marcos and his government.”

Zobel and Rewald went into business together, and Zobel even arranged a private meeting between the CIA spy and Marcos, Rewald said.